

HAMPTON CREEK COVE
CLASS I SCENIC-RECREATIONAL STATE NATURAL AREA

COUNTY: Carter

7.5' QUADRANGLE: White Rocks Mountain

PHYSIOGRAPHIC PROVINCE: Blue Ridge

OWNERSHIP: State of Tennessee

ACREAGE: 693

YEAR DESIGNATED: 1986

DESCRIPTION: Hampton Creek Cove is a 693-acre natural area located in Carter County outside of the town of Roan Mountain near Roan Mountain State Park. The Cove is in the Southern Appalachian Mountains between 3,000 to 4,800 feet elevation. The upper boundary is contiguous to the Cherokee National Forest just below where the Appalachian Trail (AT) crosses the Little Hump and Hump Mountains. The Cherokee is where the upper reaches of the Left Prong of Hampton Creek originate. The creek is a prominent feature bisecting the length of the natural area, draining young and mature forests, seeps, and farmland in the cove. The Left Prong is considered one of the most productive native trout streams in East Tennessee and is presently undergoing brook trout restoration directed by Trout Unlimited and the Tennessee Wildlife Resource Agency. Seeps, which were once the source of drinking water here, are fairly common and often found on slopes. One such seep forms a small scrub and shrub bog near a low elevation pasture that supports a diversity of wetland species.

Hampton Creek Cove is managed by the Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy (SAHC) land trust. SAHC is dedicated to the preservation of the ecological and cultural heritage of the Southern Appalachian Region. It employs a caretaker, born and raised at Hampton Creek Cove, who grazes cattle and horses on approximately 100 acres of pastureland. Fencing along the creek and other riparian restoration activities has been implemented to demonstrate the compatibility of natural area preservation and agricultural practices. Past land use is apparent at places like the old Lenoir Shell cabin ruins, where you can see vestiges of a mature grove of butternut trees and remnants of stonewalls built in the late 1800's and early 1900's.

The old field/forest succession at the lower mountain elevation provides excellent nesting habitat for golden-winged warblers, a declining neo-tropical migrant species. Because the area is so important to this warbler, the National Audubon Society designated it an "Important Bird Area" in 2005. The Birchfield Trail follows the Left Prong through pasture and forest making this a very popular birding location. Presently, the trail traverses a northern hardwood forest community on mid and upper slopes where yellow birch, striped maple, northern red oak, and tulip popular are dominant species. In partnership with the National Park Service and the Overmountain Victory Trail Association, work is underway to connect the Birchfield Trail to Yellow Mountain Gap at the AT, to retrace and protect the historic route of the Overmountain Men in their march to the Revolutionary War's 1780 Battle of King's Mountain. Hiking is also available on the Shell Hollow Trail, which was completed in 2006.

No matter your vantage point from the trail at Hampton Creek Cove, you are sure to enjoy the bountiful history, flora, wildlife, and vistas, which are of Southern Appalachian mountain heritage and beauty unequalled.

SITE MANAGEMENT: Southern Appalachians Highland Conservancy, 804 Rock City Road, Kingsport, Tennessee 37664, phone (423) 323-4993; **Division of Natural Areas**, 401 Church Street, 7th Floor L&C Annex, Nashville, TN 37243, phone (615) 532-0431; **Division of Natural Areas – East TN Office**, 3711 Middlebrook Pike, Knoxville, TN 37921, phone (865) 594-5601.

PUBLIC ACCESS: Public access is allowed; parking and hiking trails are provided.

DIRECTIONS: From Elizabethton, Tennessee, take U.S. Highway 321/19E through Hampton and then continue on 19E to the Town of Roan Mountain. From the Town of Roan Mountain, take State Route 143 south toward Roan Mountain State Park. You will immediately cross a bridge over the Doe River. Just after that bridge, turn left on Stratton Street. At the first stop sign, turn right, then bear left at the big curve on West Street and travel by the old commercial district buildings of Roan Mountain. Just past these old buildings, take the first right on Old Highway 143, then turn left on the bridge that crosses the creek (across from the old school building), and follow it to Hampton Creek Cove. The parking area is on the left just past Gray's Chapel approximately three miles from the Town of Roan Mountain.